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Mr. V. P. Pakkiriswami Pillai :—" Is not the Court of Wards a matter of public concern? The administration report of the Court of Wards is published by the Government for public information."

The hon. Mr. A. R. Knapp :—" I did not say that the Court of Wards is not a public concern. But the details as to the actual finances of the zamindari are not matters of public concern."

II

ACT ASSENTED TO BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

The hon. the President announced that the Prince of Arcot Endowments Act received the assent of His Excellency the Governor-General on the 17th January 1923.

III

COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL.

The Secretary laid on the table* proceedings of the 22nd and 23rd meetings for 1922–23 of the Standing Finance Committee of the Madras Legislative Council held on the 27th and 29th January 1923, respectively.

IV

A BILL TO AMEND THE MADRAS STAMP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1922.

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad Habib-ul-lah Sahib Bahadur :—" Sir, I beg to introduce a Bill to amend the Madras Stamp (Amendment) Act, 1922. The Bill was published a few weeks ago for public information. It is a very small and non-contentious measure. It does not contain more than three clauses. The first clause is merely preliminary; clause 2 seeks to correct an error which unfortunately crept in in section 8 of the Amendment Act. What was therein contemplated was the amendment of sub-section (1) of section 23-A, but by an error sub-section (1) (*b*) was erroneously quoted. It is now sought to eliminate the letter '(*b*)'.

" Clause 3 consists of three sub-clauses. Sub-clause (*a*) is merely intended for the purpose of correcting an arithmetical error, and sub-clause (*c*) seeks to rectify an unfortunate omission, whereas sub-clause (*b*) is intended to meet the difficulty arising from the absence of stamps of the denominations of three pies and nine pies which are referred to in article 5 (*b*) of the Schedule. I may inform the House that the Government of India have already issued their notification in exercise of the powers conferred by the Indian Stamp Act, 1899, to the following effect:

> Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, whenever the stamp duty payable under the Act in respect of any instrument cannot be paid exactly by reason of the fact that the necessary stamps are not in circulation, the amount by which the payment of duty shall on that account be in defect shall be made up by the affixing of one anna and half anna adhesive stamps.

" One anna is intended in the case of instruments for which nine pies are prescribed and half-anna in the case of instruments for which three pies are prescribed. Stamps for nine pies and three pies do not exist at the present moment, and it does not appear economical to print and supply them to the public. It is for these reasons, Sir, that this small Amendment Bill has been introduced to-day, and I beg to move that it be read in Council."

The hon. Sir K. Srinivasa Ayyangar :—" I second it."

The motion was put to the House and carried.

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* Vide Appendices A and B at pages 1780 and 1782 infra.

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The Secretary then read the title of the Bill.

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir MUHAMMAD HABIB-UL-LAH SAHIB Bahadur :—"I beg to move that the Bill be not referred to a Select Committee."

The hon. Sir K. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR :—"I second it."

The motion was put and carried.

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir MUHAMMAD HABIB-UL-LAH SAHIB Bahadur :—"I now request the hon. the President to suspend the operation of Standing Order 39."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—"I suspend the operation of the Standing Order."

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir MUHAMMAD HABIB-UL-LAH SAHIB Bahadur :—"I beg to move that the Bill be taken into consideration at once."

The hon. Sir K. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR :—"I second it."

The motion was put and carried.

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir MUHAMMAD HABIB-UL-LAH SAHIB Bahadur :—"I beg to move that the Bill be passed into law."

The hon. Sir K. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR :—"I second it."

The motion was put and carried.

V

A BILL TO AMEND THE MADRAS DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 1920.

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—"Mr. President, I beg to move that the Bill to amend the District Municipalities Act, 1920, be read in Council. Sir, the introduction of the Bill, was approved by the Governor-General in Council, and the Bill itself published in the *Fort St. George Gazette*. Hon. Members are aware that the law at present applicable to the working and constitution of district municipalities is embodied in the Act of 1920. That Act, I need hardly say, was passed under the very best auspices of, its passage having been piloted by no less a personage than, our guide, philosopher and friend whom we of this House at the present moment have the happy privilege to own as our own President ('hear, hear'). Since the passing of this Act, there has been much water flowing under the bridge. In consequence of the transfer of the Local Self-Government to the popular part of the Government under the Reforms inaugurated by the Government of India Act of 1919 and of the coming into operation of the Acts of 1920 which liberalized the constitution of the local boards and district municipalities, the people of this Presidency have been evincing a great deal of interest in matters relating to the local bodies, so that during the somewhat short interval between the passing of the District Municipalities Act of 1920 and now, the necessity has been felt for amending the Act in various respects to tide over the difficulties which have arisen in facing the situations. Some of these amendments have already been introduced into this Council and passed. Sir, there is still need for further amendment of the Act, and the present Bill attempts on a comprehensive scale to place on the Statute Book all the amendments which are considered desirable.